Self-Assessment and Planning Guide for
High-Quality Local Assessment Systems

A Publication Providing Technical Assistance to Vermont Schools As They Engage in the Process of Comprehensive Local Assessment Planning

As Vermont schools engage in local comprehensive assessment planning to ensure learning for *all* students and to meet the requirements of the School Quality Standards, the Vermont Department of Education is committed to providing clear and useful guidance informed by best practices and research. In the spring of 2006, the Department developed and published the *Core Principles of High-Quality Local Assessment Systems.* The *Core Principles* document was designed to give schools a foundation for developing a local comprehensive assessment system (Core Principles).

The *Self-Assessment and Planning Guide for High-Quality Local Assessment Systems* is a new companion document to the *Core Principles of High-Quality Local Assessment Systems.* The *Self-Assessment and Planning Guide* is a tool to support schools in self-assessing their current progress along a continuum of implementation with respect to the guidance in the *Core Principles.* Used in conjunction with the parent document, the *Self-Assessment and Planning Guide* will help schools in determining their next steps in moving forward. A school might be at different stages for different areas of the curriculum, but the *Core Principles* and the *Self-Assessment and Planning Guide* will help identify those differences in order to plan for a systemic approach to supporting student learning in all areas. Together, the two documents begin to help schools answer three key assessment questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to go? How do we get there?

The following graphic compares the *Core Principles of High-Quality Local Assessment Systems* and the *Self-Assessment and Planning Guide for High-Quality Local Assessment Systems* documents.

Intersection between

Core Principles of High Quality Local Assessment Systems

and

The Self Assessment and Planning Guide for High Quality Local Assessment Systems

<u>*Core Principles*</u>   <u>*Self Assessment and Planning Guide*</u>

Published in the spring of 2006, this document gives schools a foundation for developing a local comprehensive assessment plan.	Published in the fall of 2007, this document guides schools in assessing their progress along a continuum of implementation.

Provides Guidance Around:

- Shared Expectations for Student Learning;
- The Balance of Classroom-based and School-based Assessment;
- The Role of Formative Assessment in the Comprehensive Local Assessment System.

Links To →

Provides a Self Assessment Continuum for:

Having Shared Expectations for Student Learning:

Using Student Learning Data to Inform Instructional Decisions.

Taken together, both documents represent the integration of assessment in relation to school culture and systemic supports for local assessment as critical components of high-quality local assessment systems.

Audience:

The "Assessment in Relation to School Culture" section of the *Core Principles* document states that a high-quality local assessment system requires shared responsibility and empowerment of teachers, administrators, and school specialists. Although each plays a critical role in the implementation of the local assessment system, this document is **not** intended for individual educators to use in isolation. When the document refers to "educators," "leadership teams," and "school," these terms should be thought of as collaborative groups composed of teachers, administrators, and school specialists. Decisions regarding "current status" on the continuum and "where-to-go-next" should reflect the consensus of the group.

Systemic Support for High Quality Local Assessment:

The *Core Principles* document states that understanding how assessment information is used in a meaningful way to improve student learning needs to be a part of the systemic culture of the school. The *Self-Assessment and Planning Guide* document identifies six critical **Elements of Practice** that are associated with high-quality assessment and a part of a systemic approach to local assessment. In the *Self-Assessment and Planning Guide,* the six Elements of Practice and their focus questions serve as the categories for which the continuum of implementation was developed.

Purposeful Collaboration: To what extent do we actively promote purposeful collaboration and believe student achievement is a joint venture among educators, students, parents and stakeholders? Evidence to consider might include educators working collaboratively in teams, a strong parent-school partnership, and the regular dissemination of assessment results to all stakeholders.

Shared Leadership: To what extent is our school guided by a common vision that supports the development of a student-centered, teacher-led, learning community focused on the continuous improvement of student learning? Evidence to consider might include a shared vision which guides day-to-day efforts and decisions, administrative support for building and sustaining learning community principles, and opportunities for educators to serve in a variety of leadership roles.

Standards-Based Curriculum: To what extent does our school continually assess practices and programs on the basis of their impact on student achievement? Evidence to consider might include the use of both formative and summative assessment data to guide program modifications.

Intentional Assessments: To what extent is it evident that learning for *all*, based on student achievement, is our core purpose? Evidence to consider might include the use of assessment data to identify gaps in achievement and the development of a system of supports to meet the needs of *all* learners.

Evidence-Based Instruction: To what extent are systems within our school (fiscal, curricular, instruction) aligned with student achievement? Evidence to consider might include the development of a formal system of expectations and accountability which is consistently used to review and adjust fiscal, curricular and instructional systems.

Ongoing Professional Development: To what extent do we prioritize assessment literacy as an important component in our school's professional development plan? Evidence to consider might include the development of a long-term plan for the continuous support of educators' growth in assessment literacy (Definition).

Stages Along the Continuum of Implementation:

In the *Self-Assessment and Planning Guide*, four stages along a continuum of implementation are described for each Element of Practice. The Continuum should be viewed as a growth path as schools and districts strive to systemically support the learning of *all* students. It is not intended to be a scoring rubric that evaluates a school's progress. The value of the tool is in helping schools move forward. Educators in one school might interpret a stage in a slightly different way than educators in another school.

Pre-initiation Stage: This is a basic **awareness** stage. Although school-wide consensus might not exist, there is a critical mass of educators who realize the need to work on this Element of Practice and have the intention to do so. A school might be at the pre-initiation stage as a result of a school-wide needs assessment, the analysis of a variety of data, or by using the *Self-Assessment and Planning Guide*.

Initiation Stage: At this level, there is some **purposeful action** that is being taken to move the school forward. Purposeful action might take the form of a pilot program or process that is being initiated by some educators in the school. It should not be viewed as the isolated occurrence of "good things" happening. Purposeful means that the action is the result of decisions made by a collaborative team in the school.

Developing Stage: At the developing level, there is consensus among educators about where the school is headed and there is a **clear plan** in place for getting there. Although all aspects of the Element of Practice are not yet implemented, most are addressed.

Sustaining Stage: At the Sustaining Stage, the Element of Practice is **part of the school culture** as described in the "Assessment in Relation to School Culture" section of the *Core Principles of High-Quality Local Assessment Systems.* A key difference between the Developing and Sustaining stages is that sustainability in the Developing Stage is still fragile and dependent on carefully guided implementation. At the Sustaining Stage, the Element of Practice is truly "the way we do things here." Resource and other capacity issues that arise are addressed quickly and effectively because there is common agreement that the Elements of Practice are a priority in improving student learning.

The following graphic shows how the Elements of Practice guide the Stages of the Continuum of Implementation:

The Elements of Practice provide the categories for which the continuum of implementation was developed. Together, they reflect the systemic supports for high-quality local assessment.
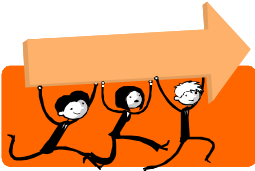
Elements of Practice	Pre-initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
Purposeful Collaboration:		Four stages along the continuum of implementation are described for each Element of Practice.		
Shared Leadership:				
Standards-Based Curriculum:				
Intentional Assessment:				
Evidence-Based Instruction:				
Ongoing Professional Development:				

Having Shared Expectations for Student Learning
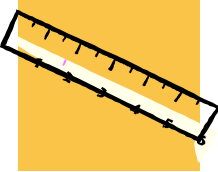### Elements of High -Quality Local Assessment Systems

Elements of Practice	Pre-initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
Purposeful Collaboration: To what extent do educators collaborate to define shared expectations for *all* learners, and specific learning goals for individual learners? (Record Evidence)	Educators recognize the need to work collaboratively to define shared learning expectations for learners in all content areas and specific learning goals for individual learners within the shared expectations.	Some educators collaborate to define shared expectations for student learning, but system-wide structures are not in place for educator teams to collaboratively identify shared learning expectations for all content areas.	There is a developing system in which educators collaborate to define shared learning expectations for all content areas. Some educators regularly develop specific learning goals for individual learners.	There is an articulated system in which educators have collaboratively defined shared learning expectations for learners in all content areas. Specific learning goals for individual learners are consistently developed.
Shared Leadership: To what extent does leadership prioritize the development of shared expectations for learning and commit administrative resources to support the development and communication of the shared expectations to all stake holders? (Record Evidence)	Individual leaders recognize that developing and communicating shared expectations for learning to all stakeholders requires support and resources.	The leadership team actively promotes a vision in which educators develop and communicate shared expectations for learning with stakeholders, but structures are not in place for implementation of this vision.	The leadership team, including teachers in leadership roles, encourages and assists educators in developing and periodically communicating shared expectations for learning with all stakeholders.	The leadership team, including teachers in leadership roles, consistently provides time, support and resources for educators to communicate shared expectations to the entire school community including staff, students, parents, and community members.
Standards-Based Curriculum: To what extent are the shared expectations for learning aligned with *Grade Expectations* and used to inform the curriculum? (Record Evidence)	Educators recognize that shared expectations for learning aligned with *Grade Expectations* are an essential tool in driving all decisions about content, instruction, and assessment.	Some educators utilize the shared expectations for learning, aligned with *Grade Expectations*, to drive decisions about content, instruction, or assessment within some subject areas and/or grade levels.	Structures are in place for educators to regularly utilize shared expectations, aligned with *Grade Expectations*, to guide curricular decisions about content, instruction, and assessment.	Curricular decisions are consistently driven by the shared expectations for learning. The enacted classroom curriculum is aligned with the *Grade Expectations* and reflects these shared expectations.

Having Shared Expectations for Student Learning
(Continued from page 4)

Elements of Practice	Pre-initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
Intentional Assessments: To what extent do assessments within the system measure student performance on shared expectations? (Record Evidence)	Educators recognize that analyzing assessments for their effectiveness in measuring performance in relation to shared expectations is an essential component in the monitoring of student achievement.	Educators have identified assessments in the existing system which measure, and do not measure, performance in relation to shared expectations.	Educators are filling the gaps in their assessment system with measures which are aligned with the shared expectations.	All assessments in the system are aligned with shared expectations and regularly analyzed for their effectiveness in measuring performance in relation to shared expectations.
Evidence-Based Instruction: To what extent are data used to prioritize shared expectations and inform instructional emphasis for *all* students? (Record Evidence)	Educators recognize the need to determine shared expectations for student learning based on the results of varied assessment data as an essential component in the monitoring of student achievement.	Educators analyze some data sources to make decisions about instructional emphasis of shared expectations for learning, but efforts are inconsistent and lack coordination.	There is a developing system in which educators periodically analyze assessment data to determine instructional emphasis of shared expectations for *all* students.	There is an articulated system in which a range of student assessment data is consistently used to prioritize shared expectations for student learning and to determine the course of instruction for *all* students at all levels.
Ongoing Professional Development: To what extent is professional development structured to support horizontal, vertical, and developmental alignment of shared expectations for learning? (Record Evidence)	Educators recognize the value of utilizing professional development opportunities to ensure the vertical, horizontal and developmental alignment of shared expectations for learning? (Definition)	Some professional development opportunities support vertical, horizontal, and developmental alignment of shared expectations for learning, but most professional development opportunities lack a focus on the alignment of expectations across grades and content areas.	The school has begun implementing a system in which teams periodically utilize professional development opportunities to address the vertical, horizontal, and developmental alignment of shared expectations for learning, but there is no long-term plan for ensuring consistent review of these expectations.	A system is in place in which collaborative teams utilize ongoing professional development opportunities to consistently review the vertical, horizontal and developmental alignment of shared expectations for learning.

Using Student Learning Data to Inform Instructional Decisions
Elements of High-Quality Local Assessment Systems

Elements of Practice	Pre-Initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
Purposeful Collaboration: To what extent do educators collaborate to interpret varied pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment data sources to inform instructional decisions for *all* students? (Record Evidence)	Educators recognize the value in working collaboratively to evaluate student performance using varied sources of pre-assessment, summative and formative assessment data to inform instructional decisions.	Some educators collaborate in the analysis of assessment data to inform instruction, but structures are not in place for the systematic gathering and collaborative analysis of varied pre-assessment, formative and summative assessments.	There is a developing system for *all* students in which educators are involved in the systematic and collaborative analysis of varied pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment data to inform instructional decisions. Time is regularly provided for educators to meet in teams.	There is an articulated system for *all* students in which educators function in purposeful collaborative teams and consistently participate in the gathering and analysis of varied pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment data to inform instructional decisions.
Shared Leadership: To what extent does leadership prioritize the development of varied pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments? Do administrators dedicate resources to support educators in data collection and analysis to inform their practice? (Record Evidence)	Individual leaders recognize that developing varied pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments within a responsive system of data collection, analysis and decision-making requires support and resources.	The leadership team actively promotes a vision in which teams work collaboratively to develop varied pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments and collect data from these assessments to inform instructional decisions, but structures are not in place for implementation of this vision.	The leadership team, including teachers in leadership roles, encourages and assists staff in developing varied pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments, and in working collaboratively to interpret and use assessment data to inform their instructional decisions.	The leadership team, including teachers in leadership roles, consistently provides time, support and resources for teachers to meet on a regular basis to analyze results from varied pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments within their system to inform their practice.
Standards-Based Curriculum: To what extent are varied pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment results analyzed and used to inform curriculum? (Record Evidence)	Educators recognize that data from multiple sources including pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments are essential tools in the analysis and improvement of curriculum.	Some educators engage in analyzing data to inform individual curricular decisions. School-wide data review and revisions in curriculum occur periodically using primarily summative data sources.	Structures are in place in which educators periodically use varied formative and summative assessment data to guide curricular decisions. School-wide, educators use multiple summative data sources to inform curricular modifications.	Individual and educator teams continuously assess and modify curriculum through the use of varied sources of pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment data. Educators use varied sources of pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment data to inform and modify curriculum.

Using Student Learning Data to Inform Instructional Decisions
(Continued from page 6)

Elements of Practice	Pre-Initiation Stage	Initiation Stage	Developing Stage	Sustaining Stage
Intentional Assessments: To what extent are pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments in the system balanced and aligned with the intended purpose, the needs of the audience, and the evidence desired? (Record Evidence)	Educators recognize the need to use a balance of pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments as evidence of learning, and understand those assessments must be periodically analyzed to ensure a match between the intended purposes, the needs of the audience, and the evidence desired. (Definition)	Educators have identified the intended purpose, the audience, and the type of evidence desired for the varied pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments currently in the system. All assessments in the system have been analyzed according to their ability to match the intended purposes, the needs of the audience, and the evidence desired.	Educators are filling the gaps in their assessment system by discarding assessments that do not match the identified purposes, the needs of the audience, and/or the evidence desired, and replacing them with those that do.	All assessments in the system reflect a purposeful balance of pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment. All assessments in the system are selected according to their intended purpose, the needs of the audience, and their usefulness in providing evidence of learning that is most valued.
Evidence-Based Instruction: To what extent are pre-assessment, formative, and summative assessment data used to inform instructional decisions? (Record Evidence)	Educators recognize that analysis of varied pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments to monitor student progress and guide instruction is an essential component in the monitoring of student achievement.	Educators analyze some data sources to make decisions about instructional practices and supports, but efforts are inconsistent and lack coordination. Evaluation of student performance is based primarily on current existing sources of summative assessment data.	There is a developing system in which a combination of pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment data are used to monitor student progress, guide instructional decisions, and determine responses to meet the individual needs of *all* students.	There is an articulated system in which all educators work in teams to consistently evaluate the performance of *all* students through the use of varied sources of pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments. Instructional decisions are guided by these data sources.
Ongoing Professional Development: To what extent are varied pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment data used to inform professional development? (Record Evidence)	Educators recognize both the importance of basing professional development on needs that emerge from pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment data and also that effective professional development is continuous and job embedded.	Some professional development activities are based on needs identified by assessment data, but the broad professional development initiative(s) lack a connection to assessment data, and occur primarily on scheduled days.	The school has begun implementing a data-driven professional development plan which addresses the needs of individuals and groups of educators. Professional development time is regularly provided for colleagues to collaborate to support their content knowledge and professional practices.	A system is in place which utilizes varied sources of pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment data to guide ongoing professional development. All educators participate in job-embedded professional development to support their content knowledge and professional practices.

Having Shared Expectations for Student Learning

Evidence Template

As educators engage in the process of determining the school's "current state" along the Continuum, This template provides a place to document the evidence that they cite in determining the appropriate stage.

Key Element: Purposeful Collaboration

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Having Shared Expectations for Student Learning

Evidence Template

As educators engage in the process of determining the school's "current state" along the Continuum, This template provides a place to document the evidence that they cite in determining the appropriate stage.

Key Element: Shared Leadership

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Having Shared Expectations for Student Learning

Evidence Template

As educators engage in the process of determining the school's "current state" along the Continuum, This template provides a place to document the evidence that they cite in determining the appropriate stage.

Key Element: Standards-Based Curriculum

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Having Shared Expectations for Student Learning

Evidence Template

As educators engage in the process of determining the school's "current state" along the Continuum, This template provides a place to document the evidence that they cite in determining the appropriate stage.

Key Element: Intentional Assessments

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Having Shared Expectations for Student Learning

Evidence Template

As educators engage in the process of determining the school's "current state" along the Continuum, This template provides a place to document the evidence that they cite in determining the appropriate stage.

Key Element: Evidence-Based Instruction

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Having Shared Expectations for Student Learning

Evidence Template

As educators engage in the process of determining the school's "current state" along the Continuum, This template provides a place to document the evidence that they cite in determining the appropriate stage.

Key Element: Ongoing Professional Development

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Using Student Learning Data to Inform Instructional Decisions

Evidence Template

As educators engage in the process of determining the school's "current state" along the Continuum, This template provides a place to document the evidence that they cite in determining the appropriate stage.

Key Element: Purposeful Collaboration

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Using Student Learning Data to Inform Instructional Decisions

Evidence Template

As educators engage in the process of determining the school's "current state" along the Continuum, This template provides a place to document the evidence that they cite in determining the appropriate stage.

Key Element: Shared Leadership

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Using Student Learning Data to Inform Instructional Decisions

Evidence Template

As educators engage in the process of determining the school's "current state" along the Continuum, This template provides a place to document the evidence that they cite in determining the appropriate stage.

Key Element: Standards-Based Curriculum

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Using Student Learning Data to Inform Instructional Decisions

Evidence Template

As educators engage in the process of determining the school's "current state" along the Continuum, This template provides a place to document the evidence that they cite in determining the appropriate stage.

Key Element: Intentional Assessments

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Using Student Learning Data to Inform Instructional Decisions

Evidence Template

As educators engage in the process of determining the school's "current state" along the Continuum, This template provides a place to document the evidence that they cite in determining the appropriate stage.

Key Element: Evidence-Based Instruction

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Using Student Learning Data to Inform Instructional Decisions

Evidence Template

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Key Element: Ongoing Professional Development

Evidence:

Next Step:

Time Line:

Definitions

Assessment Literacy:

In the 2001 report *Knowing What Students Know,*[1] The National Research Council made the following recommendation. "Teachers need training to understand how children learn subject matter and how assessment tools and practices can be used to obtain useful information about student competence. Both the initial preparation of teachers and their ongoing professional development can incorporate insights and examples from research on the integration of cognitive and measurement science and equip teachers with knowledge and skills they can use to employ high-quality assessments."

Teachers, administrators, and school specialists don't have the time or need to become experts in the technical aspects of assessment. However, there is a critical body of assessment knowledge that is important for all educators to have in order to effectively improve student learning in schools and classrooms. Ensuring this level of assessment literacy for both new and veteran staff needs to be a part of the Systemic support for high quality local assessment.

Pre-Assessment, Formative, and Summative Assessment:

> **Pre-assessments** are given prior to start of the unit. They:
> * determine students' current **readiness** for content and skill development, **interests** and/or **learning profile** in relation to the enduring understandings and essential questions, and learning goals;
> * inform **instructional decisions** and **planning;**
> * are **short** and **to the point**
> * are designed based on the summative assessments, enduring understandings, and essential questions;
> * are **not graded.**

> **Formative assessment** is a process used by teachers and student during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes (CCSSO, 2008).

> **Summative assessment** generally takes place after a period of instruction and requires making a judgment about the learning that has occurred up to a point in time. For example, a test or a research paper that is graded could be examples of summative assessments.

> Educators use varied sources of pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment data to inform and modify curriculum. All students have the same desired results (learning goals, enduring understanding and essential questions) within a unit of study. How each student reaches the desired results is differentiated within lesson plans.

Vertical, Horizontal, and Developmental Coherence:

A successful system of standards-based assessment is coherent in three fundamental ways. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment all align with the standards, targeting the same goals for

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[1] Pellegrino, J. et al. (2001). *Knowing What Students Know.* Washington, D.C.: National Research Council

learning, and working together to support students' developing understanding (**horizontal coherence**). All levels of the system (classroom, school, district, state) possess a shared vision of the goals of education, of purposes and uses of assessment, and of the criteria for competent performance (**vertical coherence**). Finally, the system needs to take into account how students' learning develops over time. Learning progressions, descriptions of successively more sophisticated ways of thinking about an idea and laying out in words and examples what it means to move toward more expert understanding establish **developmental coherence**.